

TRIBUTE TO FEDERAL
EMPLOYEES

OSCAR PERU

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, as the Presiding Officer knows, he is stuck with this Senator on the floor on many late afternoons. It seems that when everybody is packing up and heading for home, the Presiding Officer has to listen to this Senator, hopefully waxing eloquently, talking about some of the very good people who work for the Department of Homeland Security.

When looking at people who do important work for our country, there are a lot of valuable agencies, a lot of very valuable and hardworking people. But some of the best and brightest folks work for the Department of Homeland Security, trying to protect us and our families and our businesses and our country.

I have come regularly to the floor now for a couple of years to highlight some of the great work being done by the men and woman who serve us at the Department of Homeland Security. As you may recall, the Department of Homeland Security was sort of cobbled together roughly a dozen years ago. We took 20 different component agencies with over 220,000 employees stationed all over the world and said: We are going to make you the Department of Homeland Security.

It has not been easy, but I think it is a work in progress. But when you consider that the Department of Defense was created right after World War II and they still struggle at times to function as effectively as we would like, we should not be surprised that the Department of Homeland Security has gone through some growing pains, if you will, in learning how to work together.

We are proud of the work they do and grateful for the work they do. But they have some of the toughest jobs of the folks who work in Federal workforce. From stopping drugs from crossing into our borders to protecting our cyber networks from hackers to securing nuclear and radiological materials, the Department of Homeland Security has a diverse, complex, and a difficult mission—really, a combination of missions.

Each and every day, tens of thousands of Department of Homeland Security employees quietly and diligently work behind the scenes. They work to achieve the mission, the core of which is keeping over 300 million Americans safe as we go about our daily lives.

It is easy to forget that despite all it achieves each day keeping Americans safe around the world, the Department of Homeland Security is still a teenager. I said earlier that it came together in 2002, almost 14 years ago, following the attacks on 9/11, when it became clear that we needed a centralized agency to pool and share information—about what?—about the threats to our country and to coordinate the efforts to keep these threats at bay.

In 14 years, the Department of Homeland Security has done an exceptional job, integrating nearly 20 agencies from across from the government, with different histories, different cultures, and different capabilities and expertise. Senior leaders in the Department—chief among them now are Secretary Jeh Johnson and Deputy Secretary Ali Mayorkas—work each day and every day to make the Department of Homeland Security more than the sum of its part. They stand on the shoulders of those who came before them as Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of this Department.

I am proud that just yesterday the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, on which I serve as the senior Democrat, approved bipartisan legislation to support the Department's efforts by authorizing its Unity of Effort Initiative. That initiative successfully brought agencies within the Department together to pool resources, to deepen coordination, and more effectively to tackle their joint missions together. I like to say that if you want to go good fast, go alone. If you want to go far, travel together. What we see happening at the Department of Homeland Security is the creation of a cohesive unit of what were very many different disparate agencies.

One component agency within the Department of Homeland Security that not only serves a critical mission today but has a long and storied history is called U.S. Customs and Border Protection. In 1789—1789—before some of our pages were born, the U.S. Customs Service was established, and a fleet of vessels set out patrolling our shores to prevent the shipment of illegal goods—1789.

Then in 1924, nearly 92 years ago to the day, the U.S. Border Patrol was established. Later in 2003, the Customs Service and the Border Patrol merged to create the modern Customs and Border Protection agency that operates within the Department of Homeland Security today. Today, Customs and Border Protection performs a number of duties on the frontlines of the battle against threats such as terrorism, drugs, and human trafficking. They work to secure thousands of miles of border and coastline around the country.

They work to facilitate travel, to inspect ships and cargo at our ports of entry. They work to stop illegal drugs and other contraband and violent criminals from entering into our country. Today alone, its 60,000 employees are hard at work welcoming nearly 1 million visitors to our country—just in 1 day—screening more than 67,000 cargo containers for hazards and customs violations, and stopping more than 12,000 pounds of illicit drugs from entering our country.

I am not talking about what they do in a year, or a month, or even a week. That is what they do in a day. Think about that—in one day. The key resource that our Customs officials on

the frontlines count on is the support of CBP's Air and Marine Operations. Air and Marine Operations uses a fleet of 256 aircraft and 286 marine vessels to detect, to track, and to apprehend criminals in places that agents can't reach on foot or in cars.

From fast interceptor boats to Huey helicopters to P-3 aircraft, like the one I flew in during most of my 23 years in the Navy, Air and Marine Operations provides critical support to CBP agents. They often do important and dangerous work. Air and Marine agents are also key in helping to find and rescue people on our borders who may be in danger, saving countless people who are found lost or injured in some of the most remote parts of the country.

One CBP Air and Marine Operations agent who goes above and beyond to help secure our borders and keep people safe looks a lot like this fellow. His name is Oscar Peru, like the country. He is pictured here to my left. Oscar Peru is a CBP aviation enforcement agent based out of Tucson, AZ. He was raised in Tucson.

Oscar joined the Arizona Army National Guard after college. He served his State and his country as a guardsman for 10 years, including by fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom. After working for the State of Arizona on their Joint Counter Narcotics Task Force, he joined the Border Patrol as a senior patrol agent in 2003.

After 5 years as a Border Patrol agent, Oscar joined the Border Patrol Search, Trauma, and Rescue Unit. As a trained emergency medical technician, Oscar was able to provide lifesaving care to countless men, women, and children who were lost or injured in some of the harshest environments along the southwestern border of our country.

At all hours of the night, Oscar has conducted searches to find and save those in need. Oscar also performed the difficult and—I am sure—heart-breaking task of retrieving the bodies of those who have perished so they can be returned to their families and given a proper burial.

Since 2008, Oscar Peru has served as an aviation enforcement agent, coordinating efforts across Federal agencies. Working with State and local law enforcement, Oscar conducts operations to identify and stop criminal activity along the border, from drug smuggling to human trafficking to rescue operations.

Oscar's work has saved countless lives, arrested countless criminals, and kept countless pounds of drugs from ever reaching our communities.

Oscar, I would say that is one impressive day's work. We are grateful to you for doing it.

Those who know Oscar routinely describe him as a man who shows incredible compassion for everyone that he encounters, both in his personal life and in his work.

Through his years of dedicated service, Oscar has earned the trust of his

peers, who rely on him as a leader during risky operations and dangerous missions. As a certified master and instructor in helicopter ropes and suspension techniques, Oscar uses his experience to train others in skills necessary to operate safely in a dangerous environment, often leaning out of the door of a helicopter hundreds of feet up in the air. It is no wonder his colleagues describe Oscar as courageous and as an inspiration to those around him.

So, Oscar, my friend, we say thank you. Thank you for your remarkable and continued service to our country and to your community in Tucson. A special thanks for all of the lives you have saved and will continue to save through your heroic work.

To Oscar's wife and four children, we say thank you for sharing with us a good man, your husband and your dad, for letting him do the important work that he does every day to keep Americans safe along the southern border and really around our country.

To the 1,200 men and women of the Air and Marine Operations and the 60,000 employees at Customs and Border Protection, thank you for your continued service to our country and for your dedication to the safety and security of so many others. As I said earlier, more than 200,000 employees at the Department of Homeland Security have some of the toughest jobs of any of our public servants, working outside the spotlight to tackle difficult challenges and to protect our community and our families.

To each of you, I just want to say again, as I say here every month: Thank you. Keep up the good work. May God bless each and every one of you.

COMMENDING JOHN KOSKINEN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President I want to take another few minutes—I think I have the time. I don't see anybody waiting to speak. I want to take a minute and say something about a fellow named John Koskinen. John Koskinen is the Commissioner of the IRS. In 2013, at a time of great tumult at the IRS, President Obama turned to John Koskinen to lead the IRS because of his reputation in the public and private sectors as a go-to manager of troubled enterprises.

He was 74 at the time. He agreed to take this on. He did not need to do this. He needed to do this job like he needed another head, but he said that he would do it. He agreed to do it because the President asked him to serve our country, and they needed a strong leader at the IRS.

Prior to his service at the IRS, he held the position of Non-Executive Chairman at Freddie Mac from September 2008 to December 2011. During that time he served as the interim CEO at Freddie Mac—that was a tumultuous time, a very difficult time for our country—and as the principal fi-

nancial officer after the death of Freddie Mac's acting CFO in April of 2009.

He retired from the Freddie Mac board in 2012. I want to mention another thing or two about John Koskinen's service prior to coming on board in the last decade to help us in the public sector. Prior to serving on the Freddie Mac board, Koskinen served as the president of the U.S. Soccer Foundation from 2004 to 2008. He also previously served as deputy mayor of the District of Columbia, the Deputy Director for Management at the Office of Management and Budget, and the Chairman of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion.

Prior to entering government service, John Koskinen worked for 21 years for the Palmieri Company, as vice president, president, CEO and chairman, working in the realm of turnarounds—a person helping to turn around large failed enterprises. Earlier in his career, he served as the administrative assistant to then Senator Abraham Ribicoff, legislative assistant to Mayor John Lindsay, and Assistant to the Deputy Executive Director of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.

He practiced law with the firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and clerked for Judge David Bazelon, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

He got his bachelor's degree from Duke University and his law degree from Yale. I mean, what a resume.

At the age of 74, as somebody who helped turn around a lot of failed enterprises, our President reached out to him and probably said: I know you are 74, an age where a lot of people are more interested in slowing down and taking life easy. He took on one of the toughest challenges of all.

He is one of the finest people I know in public service. There are some folks in the Congress who have been asserting that he is unfit for service. I just want to say: They could not be more mistaken. This a good and decent man. I was raised to treat other people the way I want to be treated, to figure out the right thing to do, and to treat others the way I want to be treated.

Given the sacrifices that he has made with his life at this stage of his life, rather than taking brickbats, he should be taking bouquets. So I would say to you, John Koskinen, if you are out there listening: I know you have other things to do rather than listen to wrapups here in the Senate before we begin the Memorial Day break, but I want to say thank you for a lifetime of service, and thank you especially for your service as our leader in the IRS. God bless you and your family. Thanks to them for sharing with us a very good human being.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter dated May 23, 2016, from John Koskinen, Commissioner of the IRS, whom I was just discussing, to the Hon-

orable BOB GOODLATTE, chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary in the U.S. House of Representatives.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY,
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE,
Washington, DC, May 23, 2016.

Hon. BOB GOODLATTE,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter of May 18 inviting me to testify at the Judiciary Committee hearing on May 24 regarding the Committee's inquiry into allegations made against me in my role as IRS Commissioner. I thank you for extending me that courtesy, and for affording me the opportunity to provide the Committee with information in response to the issues raised by some Members of the House. I have the deepest respect for you and for this Committee, and recognize your Committee's responsibility to carefully evaluate these allegations.

When the Committee announced this hearing, I was returning from a week in China where I met with the tax administrators of 43 nations to discuss international tax avoidance issues. As a result, since I returned, my schedule has been more crowded than usual, including preparations for a previously scheduled hearing before the House Ways and Means Committee on Wednesday, May 25. Therefore, the short notice provided has left me without sufficient time to prepare to appear in person on Tuesday for what could be a wide-ranging and complex discussion regarding claims that may only become clear after the hearing's first panel. Thus, while I must regrettably decline your invitation, I remain willing to appear before the Committee in the future.

In the meantime, if you think it is appropriate and helpful to include in the record at this time, I enclose an initial statement summarizing why the allegations against me lack merit. I think this information may also be useful to witnesses at the second hearing you have announced for June with outside experts.

Should the Committee choose to undertake further steps, I hope that it will do so in a manner consistent with the House's longstanding concern for, and provision of, the due process that must attend such a serious course of action. I would be pleased to talk with you further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

JOHN A. KOSKINEN.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOHN A. KOSKINEN,
COMMISSIONER, INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
BEFORE THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE—
FOR ITS HEARING: EXAMINING THE ALLEGA-
TIONS OF MISCONDUCT AGAINST IRS COM-
MISSIONER JOHN KOSKINEN, PART I MAY 24, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Member Conyers and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a summary statement for the record in connection with your review of the allegations by some Members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. I hope this summary statement is helpful as you consider whether to initiate a more formal inquiry. I stand ready to cooperate with your Committee with regard to any actions it deems appropriate.

I have great respect for our institutions of government, including the United States Congress and each of its Members. When I began my service as Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, I took over an agency under investigation by six different bodies